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# Historical Timeline - Centennial Celebration: The Mortola Years

Marilyn E. Weigold Ph.D., University Historian  
*Pace University*

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Mrs. Mortola, members of the Mortola family, President Caputo, Chairman Bianco, members of the board of trustees of Pace University, alumni, students, faculty, staff, and friends: I am privileged to be here this afternoon to provide an overview of the relationship between Dr. Edward J. Mortola and the institution to which he devoted most of his adult life.

That relationship began in 1947 when thirty year old Ed Mortola arrived at Pace to assume the position of Assistant Dean. 1947 was also the year that Pace Institute became Pace College. One year later the N.Y. State Board of Regents accorded Pace the authority to award the B.B.A. degree. In 1953 Pace was permitted to offer the B.A. degree and in 1958 the M.B.A.

The college's rapid academic progress during this period was attributable to the close working relationship between Dr. Mortola and Pace President, Robert Scott Pace. This association provided the continuity which helped the institution move forward without losing sight of its origins. What Robert Pace saw in the young Ed Mortola was an individual with vision who would take the college to new heights by building upon the solid foundation laid by Robert's father and uncle, the co-founders of Pace Institute.

Toward that end, Robert Pace appointed Dr. Mortola to a series of increasingly demanding positions. Only two years after arriving at Pace, Dr. Mortola became Dean of the college. In 1950 he was named Provost, a position he held until 1954. During this period, the College not only advanced academically but it acquired a splendid new home at 41 Park Row. The historic 1858 New York Times building was purchased by Pace in 1951. After thorough refurbishing, this impressive building, minus the basement swimming pool and penthouse apartment for the college president, which were eliminated from Pace's original construction plans, opened in 1953.

Pace College was just getting comfortable in its spacious new quarters when Dr. Mortola was appointed Vice President, a position he held from 1954 until 1960 when he was named President of Pace College. A formal inauguration took place in January 1961. Dr. Mortola's first decade as President was characterized by rapid expansion of academic programs and facilities. A new Pleasantville campus sprang up, seemingly overnight, after Pace alumnus Wayne Marks and his wife, Helen, donated their Westchester estate to Pace. Initially authorized, in 1962, to grant associate degrees, in 1965 Pace Pleasantville was permitted to confer the B.B.A. degree in the evening division.

The close ties forged by Dr. Mortola and the Pace board of trustees with corporations in Westchester and Fairfield Counties resulted in a steady stream of corporate employees matriculating in the B.B.A. program in Pleasantville. The B.A. and B.S. degree programs, authorized in 1966, also proved popular in Pleasantville. That same year, the School of Education and the School of Nursing were established. By 1969 Pace began offering master's degrees in Education. The late sixties also saw the expansion of the M.B.A. program to Pleasantville and the naming of the graduate and undergraduate business schools for alumnus and trustee Joseph I. Lubin.

As the decade of the 1970's dawned, Pace College, under the leadership of Dr. Edward J. Mortola, was clearly on the move. At the start of the new decade the Pace Plaza building opened and scarcely a year went by without a significant programmatic or facilities enhancement. The most noteworthy development occurred in 1973 when Pace became a university. Elated though he was with this crowning achievement, the President of Pace **University** did not rest on his laurels. Given the centrality of the liberal arts in any university, he turned his attention to the School of Arts and Sciences which, in 1974, became the Charles H. Dyson College of Arts and Sciences in honor of alumnus and trustee Charles Dyson. In 1975 the School of Nursing was named the Lienhard School for alumnus and trustee Gustav O. Lienhard.

By the mid-seventies, Pace was on the move geographically. Following the consolidation of The College of White Plains with Pace University in 1975, the Pace University School of Law opened on the White Plains campus in 1976. In 1977 the University acquired the assets of Briarcliff College. All of these acquisitions made Dr. Mortola the real estate mogul of higher education, a development noted by Newsweek magazine in 1977. Quite aside from the fact that Ed Mortola beat Donald Trump to Briarcliff by more than two decades, it's important to note that, under Dr. Mortola's leadership, Pace was not only expanding territorially but it was expanding academically as well. In 1979 Pace University became the first institution in N.Y. State to offer the Doctor of Psychology degree in School and Community Counseling.

The 1980's saw the library on the Pleasantville campus named the Edward and Doris Mortola Library, a fitting tribute to two extraordinary individuals who had contributed so much to the university. The library acquired its

name in 1983, an extremely active year marked by the completion of the west wing addition to the Pace Plaza building and the founding of the School of Computer Science and Information Systems, now the Seidenberg School, named for alumnus and benefactor Ivan Seidenberg. In 1985 the Master's program in publishing was established and the first townhouse dormitory was completed in Pleasantville. In 1987, the new Lubin Graduate Center in downtown White Plains opened while in Pleasantville a new wing of the Dyson Hall science building and the second townhouse dormitory were completed.

Dr. Mortola was the guiding force behind the academic and facilities enhancements of the 1980's, first as President, and then, from 1984 through 1987, as Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer. In 1987 Dr. Mortola became Chancellor and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, a position he held until 1990. During this period, Dr. Mortola and Pace's dedicated trustees identified challenges and opportunities facing the University as the twentieth century drew to a close.

For most of his career at Pace, Dr. Mortola was rightly convinced that the University would become what New York became. By 1990, however, it was apparent to Ed Mortola that Pace, which, for years, had conducted programs overseas, would establish an ever greater presence beyond the New York area. Today, under the leadership of President David A. Caputo, strengthening Pace's international efforts is a very important initiative. The University's Strategic Plan speaks to Pace's accelerated efforts in the international arena and it contains cutting-edge ideas for moving the University forward in so many other areas, thereby enabling Pace to ascend to the next tier of the U.S. News and World Report rankings. This step is to the early twenty-first century what becoming a University was to Pace in the 1970's and like the attainment of University status, it is a goal which is within reach.

In the tradition of Edward J. Mortola, but with a decidedly twenty-first century vision, shaped by the social, economic, and military realities of a post-9-11 world, Pace is responding to a changing New York and a changing global environment by moving ahead on a broad front. In his day, Ed Mortola, the Navy man who loved the water, tossed many stones into the sea, figuratively speaking. Some created a big splash; others created a small ripple; still others immediately sank to the bottom but he was undeterred and his determination paid off.

The same holds true today. Since the dawn of the new millennium, the University has launched many initiatives, the Center for Downtown New York, the Pace Poll, Project Pericles and the Pace Academy for the Environment just to mention a few. If I let my imagination roam and think of Dr. Mortola looking down upon the institution he so dearly loved, while, simultaneously perusing Reaching New Heights: Pace University Second Century Strategic Plan, 2003-2008, I can almost hear him say: “Well done!” Beyond this truly wonderful Centennial year, as Pace marches confidently forward into its second century, the Pace that Ed Mortola knew and the Pace we know today will continue to evolve while remaining true to its entrepreneurial spirit, its motto “Opportunitas” and its people centered focus.

In 1986 during the last of a series of interviews conducted for the Pace oral history project, Dr. Mortola was asked about his hopes for the University’s future. He responded by saying that what he wanted most to see continue was Pace’s “humanity...its concerns about the individual.”

If you’re looking down, Dr. Mortola, you will see that your hopes have been realized and that is a truly splendid birthday gift for the century old institution whose destiny you shaped!